

Coins

1942 silver dimes with 'overdates' can be valuable

By Roger Boye

HERE ARE SOME answers to questions about coins and currency:

Q—Years ago, my father saved a bunch of silver dimes dated 1942, thinking they were extremely valuable. What's so special about them?

K.M., Downers Grove

A—On a few 1942 dimes, the digit "1" appears over the digit "2" in the date. Many of those so-called overdates are worth at least \$150 to collectors, while normal 1942 dimes in circulated condition retail for less than \$1.

Most likely, your coins have normal dates, but you should examine them with a strong magnifying glass to be sure.

Q—How many different coin denominations has the United States government produced? I say 13 and my friend says 15. Who's right?

L.G., Chicago

A—Neither of you. Since 1792, the Bureau of the Mint has produced coins in 16 denominations, ranging from a half-cent piece to a \$20 gold coin. Only six types of coins are made today.

Q—I read your article about the old Norwegian coin that may help prove the Vikings visited America long before Columbus. Quite frankly, I think it's all a hoax because some prankster probably buried the coin in Maine just a few years ago. What do the experts say?

M.B., Chicago

A—Although no one knows for certain how the 11th-Century Norwegian penny got to Maine, many scholars discount the possibility that the coin was clandestinely "planted" at the archeological site where it was found.

For one thing, a prankster would have needed information about medieval Norwegian coins that is available to only a handful of scholars. Also, the coin is worth thousands of dollars to collectors. Experts believe a prankster would have used another, more common Norwegian coin from the 10th or 11th centuries to "salt the site."

Eventually, more answers may be forthcoming. The Maine State Museum in Augusta is seeking funds to conduct a major excavation in the area of the coin find.

Q—I've got several 1943 steel Lincoln cents and would like to know how valuable they are. It has been years since I've found one in circulation.

L.W., Chicago

A—Dealers sell extremely fine specimens for about a quarter. The zinc-coated steel cents, made during the war to conserve copper, are still rather common in collections.

Have questions about coins or currency? Send them to Roger Boye, Arts & Fun, Room 400, The Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Av., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply.